

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /104 W

----- 038888

R 211925Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7271

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: TAVERNE'S NEW PARTY TO CHALLENGE LEFT-

WING LABORITES

1. SUMMARY: DICK TAVERNE HAS DECIDED TO PUT HIS FAITH
IN THE POPULAR DEMAND FOR A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY
TO THE ELECTORAL TEST. STARTING FROM SCRATCH,
FINANCIALLY AND ORGANIZATIONALY, HE WILL FIELD
CANDIDATES AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IN AT LEAST
THREE CONSTITUENCIES CURRENTLY HELD BY LEFT-WING
LABOR MPS. HE HOPES, BY THEIR SUCCESS, TO PRECIPITATE
A SPLIT IN THE LABOR PARTY AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK
FOR A BROAD COALITION OF MODERATES. THE ODDS AGAINST
HIM ARE OVERWHELMING, BUT REMEMBERING THE STUNNING
UPSET HE SCORED AT LINCOLN, FEW ARE READY SIMPLY TO
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DISMISS HIS CHALLENGE -- LEAST OF ALL TONY BENN, WHO

MAY LOSE HIS SEAT AS A RESULT. END SUMMARY

2. CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRACY (CSD), THE ORGANIZATION FOUNDED BY DICK TAVERNE IN THE WAKE OF HIS STUNNING BY-ELECTION VICTORY AT LINCOLN LAST MARCH 1, ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK THAT IT WOULD FIELD AT LEAST THREE CANDIDATES AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, ALL OF THEM IN CONSTITUENCIES CURRENTLY REPRESENTED BY LEFT-WING LABOR MPS. ALTHOUGH TAVERNE HIMSELF WILL RUN AGAIN UNDER THE BANNER OF HIS OWN DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY IN LINCOLN, THE THREE CSD CANDIDATES WILL CAMPAIGN AS SOCIAL DEMOCRATS.

3. IN THE THREE CONTESTS, GREATEST INTEREST WILL FOCUS ON BRISTOL (SOUTH-EAST) WHERE TONY BENN, A MAJOR ASPIRANT TO THE FUTURE LEADERSHIP OF THE LABOR PARTY, WILL BE DEFENDING A MARGINAL SEAT. BENN, WHO HAS BEEN ASSIDUOUSLY COURTING LEFT-WING SUPPORT AND PROPAGATING A RADICAL POPULISM IN RECENT YEARS, GAVE A PROMINENT AND VOCAL LEAD TO EFFORTS TO DESTROY TAVERNE POLITICALLY. TAVERNE, FOR HIS PART, REGARDS BENN AS THE SYMBOL OF ALL THAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH THE LABOR PARTY.

4. THE CSD CANDIDATE, JAMES ROBERTSON, WAS ONCE A SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT IN THE CABINET OFFICE AND IS NOW WORKING IN THE CITY WHERE HE HAS PREPARED STUDIES ADVOCATING MAJOR ECONOMIC REFORMS. HE IS A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE INTELLIGENCE, ENERGY, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE, AND HE EAGERLY ACCEPTED TAVERNE'S PROPOSAL THAT HE CHALLENGE BENN. TAVERNE HAS KNOWN ROBERTSON SINCE COLLEGE DAYS; HE FOLLOWED HIM BY ONE YEAR THROUGH BALLIOL WHERE THEY BOTH GOT FIRSTS IN GREATS.

5. ANOTHER TAVERNE SUPPORTER, JOHN MARTIN, WILL RUN AGAINST NORMAN ATKINSON AT TOTTENHAM. ATKINSON IS AN EXTREME LEFT-WINGER AND THE TRIBUNE GROUP'S PERENNIAL CHALLENGER TO JIM CALLAGHAN FOR THE POSITION OF PARTY TREASURER. MARTIN STOOD AS A LABOR CANDIDATE IN 1964 AGAINST PETER WALKER, THE PRESENT SECRETARY OF STATE

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FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY.

6. THE THIRD CONTEST WILL BE AT PENISTONE WHERE MARTIN EADEN WILL TAKE ON JOHN MENDELSON. EADEN'S FATHER BROKE WITH THE PARTY ORGANIZATION THERE AND FOUGHT AS AN INDEPENDENT TO GAIN A LOCAL COUNCIL SEAT. WHEN EADEN SUPPORTED HIS FATHER, HE WAS THROWN OUT OF THE PARTY. THE EADENS THUS FORMED THE NUCLEUS OF A

DISAFFECTED GROUP WITHIN THE LOCAL LABOR PARTY ONLY
TOO EAGER TO RALLY TO TAVERNE.

7. THE LIBERALS WILL ALSO FIELD A CANDIDATE IN
PENISTONE, BUT THUS FAR AT LEAST THEY HAVE NOT
NOMINATED ANYONE FOR BRISTOL (SE) OR TOTTENHAM. AS
FAR AS POSSIBLE, TAVERNE AND THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADER-
SHIP OF THE LIBERALS ARE ANXIOUS NOT TO COMPETE AGAINST
ONE ANOTHER SINCE THEY ADVOCATE ROUGHLY THE SAME

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POLICIES AND APPEAL TO MANY OF THE SAME VOTERS.

8. COMMENT: TAVERNE DESPAIRS OF EVER SEEING THE

MODERATES REGAIN CONTROL OF THE LABOR PARTY. HE BELIEVES IT IS PAST TIME THEY BROKE AWAY AND FORMED A NEW NON-MARXIST PARTY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND REFORM FREE FROM CONTROL BY THE TRADE UNIONS. SUCH A PARTY, HE BELIEVES, WOULD HAVE AN ENORMOUS ELECTORAL APPEAL AND, EMBRACING LIBERALS, WOULD EVENTUALLY ACHIEVE ON A NATIONAL SCALE WHAT HIS OWN DEMOCRATIC LABOR ORGANIZATION ACCOMPLISHED IN LINCOLN.

9. TAVERNE'S VISION IS GRANDIOSE AND THE ODDS AGAINST ITS REALIZATION ARE OVERWHELMING. NONETHELESS, GIVEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE EXTENT OF POPULAR UNHAPPINESS WITH THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES, THIS IS PROBABLY AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY FOR TAVERNE TO PUT HIS IDEAS TO THE TEST. HE LACKS MONEY, HE LACKS ORGANIZATION, AND TWO OF THE THREE SEATS HE HAS CHOSEN TO CONTEST ARE LABOR STRONGHOLDS. YET, IF HIS CANDIDATES MADE A CREDITABLE SHOWING, CSD WOULD BECOME AN INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE REFUGE FOR MODERATES WHO NO LONGER FELT AT HOME WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON00944
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740128/aaaaazzt.tel
Line Count: 196
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jul-2001 by maustmc>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TAVERNE'S NEW PARTY TO CHALLENGE LEFT- WING LABORITES
TAGS: PINT, UK, (TAVERNE, DICK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005